

December 2009

The averaging period used for the following assessment was 1971-2000.

UK overview

The month was mostly changeable, the first 10 days being mild but it then turned colder with snowfalls after mid-month. Overall, it was a very cold month with mean temperatures 1.5 to 2.0 °C below the 1971-2000 normal over England and Wales, 2.0 to 2.5 °C below over Northern Ireland and 2.5 to 3.5 °C below over Scotland. It was the coldest December over the UK since 1995.

Rainfall ranged from well below average over western Scotland to above average along the east coast, and in south-east England.

Sunshine totals were generally well above normal, the main exceptions being central and eastern Scotland. It was the fourth-sunniest December in a series from 1929, and similar to December 2008.

A maximum temperature of 13.8 °C was recorded at Ibsley (Hampshire) on 9th. A minimum temperature of -18.4 °C was recorded on 29th at Braemar (Aberdeenshire), where the maximum temperature was only -9.7 °C on 28th. In the 24 hours ending at 0900 on 6th, 81.0 mm of rainfall was measured at Treherbert (Mid-Glamorgan). 40 cm of lying snow was reported from Aberfeldy (Perth and Kinross) at 0900 on 27th. A wind gust of 69 mph was recorded at Needles Old Battery on the Isle of Wight on 6th.

England diary of highlights

Most of the month was changeable, the first 10 days being mild but it then became colder with snowfalls after mid-month. Overall, it was a cold month with mean temperatures typically between 1.5 and 2.0 °C below the 1971-2000 normal. It was the coldest December since 1996. Rainfall was generally close to normal, but it was wetter than normal in many eastern areas. Sunshine totals were generally well above normal, especially in Lincolnshire and the Midlands. It was the fourth-sunniest December in a series from 1929, and similar to December 2008.

1st to 8th: An unsettled start with a succession of weather fronts moving eastwards. Bands of rain crossed the country, although there were some drier, brighter interludes. Temperatures were generally near or above average, although there were some frosty nights with patchy fog. On the morning of 1st the temperature fell to -4.9 °C at Woodford (Manchester). It was also windy at times, particularly in the south-west.

9th to 14th: Pressure rose to give a spell of mainly dry weather with some sunshine. However, it turned misty in places overnight with patchy fog forming, lingering all day in the Vale of York on 12th. It was mild at first but it gradually became colder with overnight frost in places from 10th.

15th to 19th: An area of low pressure moved southwards on 15th with another moving down the North Sea on 16th. Associated weather fronts moved southwards bringing periods of rain. It also became colder as winds turned into the north. On 18th and 19th an area of low pressure became slow-moving over the near-Continent. Sleet and snow over East Anglia and the south-east resulted in 5 to 10 cm of lying snow by 0900 on 18th.

20th to 25th: A cold spell with some hard overnight frosts. Temperatures struggled to rise above freezing in many parts during the daytime. It was also unsettled with further outbreaks of rain, sleet or snow. An area of rain spread into the south on 23rd falling onto frozen ground to cause widespread ice. The rain turned to sleet

and snow as it moved northwards across the rest of England, giving falls of several cm in places. The sleet and snow died out during 24th, to give many parts a dry and sunny Christmas Day.

26th to 31st: The cold spell continued with further overnight frosts. Rain spread across most parts on 26th, causing more widespread ice overnight in the Midlands and the north. Many parts had showers on 27th, but these died out later to allow a widespread hard frost, with patchy fog that was slow to clear. Rain spread into the south on 29th becoming heavy and persistent with several totals around 20 mm, and 26.2 mm at North Wyke (Devon). The rain moved northwards into the Midlands and then northern England, turning to sleet and snow. Depths of 10 to 15 cm were reported quite widely over northern England by 30th along with strong easterly winds. The rain, sleet and snow died out in most parts overnight, although further sleet and snow showers continued to affect the north-east. Wintry showers continued in the north-east on 31st but many other parts became dry and sunny.

Wales diary of highlights

The month saw mainly changeable weather, the first 10 days being mild but it turned much colder thereafter. Overall, it was a cold month with mean temperatures between 1.5 and 2.0 °C below the 1971-2000 normal, making it the coldest December since 1996. Rainfall was close to or a little below average. Sunshine totals were well above normal across south and mid Wales, but close to average in the north.

1st to 9th: The unsettled weather of November continued into December, with weather fronts moving eastwards to give spells of rain or showers. Totals over 25 mm were recorded quite widely on 5th, with 42.5 mm at Libanus (Powys). There were some drier and brighter interludes and it was also quite windy at times. Temperatures were generally near or above average, although there were a few frosty nights.

10th to 14th: Pressure rose to give a spell of mainly dry and quiet weather with some sunshine. However some mist and fog formed overnight, particularly on 11th and 12th, which was slow to clear. It became colder with frosts on most nights.

15th to 18th: Several areas of low pressure moved southwards across eastern England, with a succession of fronts moving south over Wales bringing some mostly light rain at times, but sleet and snow fell over higher ground. Some drier interludes with sunshine, but with winds generally from the north it turned colder.

19th to 25th: Low pressure remained over the UK for much of this period, with a band of rain, sleet and snow moving south across Wales later on 19th and this heralded colder conditions spreading from the north. Temperatures struggled to rise above freezing in many parts during the daytime. There were further showers or longer outbreaks of rain, sleet and snow at times, particularly on 23rd, when an area of rain over south-west England moved north across Wales and turned readily to snow giving some significant accumulations in places. The sleet and snow died out on 24th, to give most parts a dry and sunny Christmas Day.

26th to 31st: The cold spell continued, with some hard overnight frosts. Showers spread across parts of Wales on 26th and 27th, some wintry over higher ground. A mainly dry but cold day on 28th, but on 29th an area of rain moved up from the south and turned to snow over the Brecon Beacons and central & northern Wales. The snow continued at times for much of 30th before dying out overnight, with 10 to 15 cm of snow reported quite widely over these areas. Most parts had a dry but rather cold day on 31st.

Scotland diary of highlights

The weather was mainly changeable; the first 10 days were mild but it turned colder thereafter with snowfalls after mid-month. Overall it was a very cold month, with mean temperatures typically 2.5 to 3.5 °C below the 1971-2000 normal. It was the coldest December since 1995 and the equal fourth-coldest in a series from 1914. The number of days with air frost was the highest for December since 1981. There was a spell of very low minimum temperatures from 22nd to 30th, with less than -10 °C recorded across the Highlands each

night. Rainfall was generally well below average, particularly across western and northern areas where approximately 50% of normal was recorded. Sunshine totals varied from well above normal across northern areas to somewhat below in parts of central and eastern Scotland.

1st to 9th: Frosty start to 1st before rain with snow edged east later, with 30.8 mm at Machrihanish (Argyll and Bute). Mainly dry and cloudy on 2nd but heavy showers developed in the west. The 3rd saw showery rain over the west, with snow on hills, and heavy rain developing in the east. Mainly dry and bright on 4th but rain reached the south-west during the evening. Cloudy with rain on 5th, becoming windy in the evening. Cloudy with rain on 6th but becoming brighter with showers, with 36.2 mm recorded at Achnagart (Highland). Rain crossed the south and east on 7th, while the north-west stayed bright. A locally foggy and frosty start on 8th gave way to another band of rain. Showers affected western areas on 9th but it was mainly dry and bright elsewhere.

10th to 13th: On 10th there were some showers on the west coast, but it was dry elsewhere with sunshine, and frost and fog patches early and late. Dry on 11th with extensive fog lasting all day in the Glasgow and Edinburgh areas. Dry on 12th with fog again lingering all day in places and a maximum temperature of -1.8 °C at Kinloss (Moray). Similar on 13th although milder conditions with light rain moved into the north in the evening.

14th to 15th: On 14th fog cleared from the Glasgow area to be followed by light freezing rain, otherwise it was generally cloudy with outbreaks of rain spreading south-west. The 15th was bright in the west while showers affected eastern areas.

16th to 31st: Rain or showers in the east on 16th but bright in the west. Cold on 17th with frequent sleet and snow showers across eastern areas and some reaching the south-west later. The south was mainly dry and cold on 18th while sleet and snow showers affected the north. A band of sleet and snow moved southwards on 19th with frequent snow showers following in the north. Sleet and snow showers affected much of the west on 20th. Continuing cold with scattered snow showers on 21st. On the morning of 22nd heavy snow fell across Aberdeenshire with another area over the south in the late afternoon. A band of snow affected the eastern central lowlands early on 23rd, otherwise it was dry with sunny spells. Wintry showers in north and east on 24th. On Christmas Day there were a few rain and sleet showers, mainly coastal. On Boxing Day the north stayed dry, bright and very cold while sleet and snow showers affected the south. Heavy snow affected parts of Perth & Kinross and Fife in the early hours of 27th, with a depth of 40 cm reported from Aberfeldy (Perth & Kinross), otherwise it was mainly dry and bright. Wintry showers affected the north on 28th. Isolated wintry showers in the north and east on 29th, otherwise it was dry, bright and cold with the temperature at Braemar (Aberdeenshire) falling to -18.4 °C. Mostly cloudy on 30th, with wintry showers mainly across the north and east, but less cold. Sunny intervals and scattered wintry showers in the north and east on 31st.

Northern Ireland diary of highlights

The weather was mainly changeable, the first 10 days being mild but colder thereafter. Overall, it was a very cold month with mean temperatures typically between 2.0 and 2.5 °C below the 1971-2000 normal. It was the coldest December since 1981 and equal fourth-coldest in a series from 1914. The number of days with air frost was the highest for December since 1981. Rainfall was generally below average, particularly over western areas. Sunshine totals were well above normal.

1st to 9th: The 1st was cloudy with rain. Cloudy again on 2nd with showers, most frequent along the east coast. The 3rd was bright, with showers in the north and west. Cloudy on 4th with rain during the afternoon becoming heavier during the evening, with 30.2 mm recorded at Lough Fea (County Tyrone). Cloudy with rain on 5th. Sunny intervals and scattered showers on 6th. A wet start on 7th then sunshine and showers. More rain on 8th but it was mild, with the temperature reaching 12.3 °C at Killowen (County Down). Mild again on 9th, with sunshine and a few showers.

10th to 19th: Mainly dry on 10th with some sunshine, but a few fog patches were slow to clear. Mainly cloudy on 11th with rain in the west at first. Dry on 12th and 13th with variable cloud and some fog. Overnight mist, fog and frost cleared on 14th leaving a cloudy day with patchy rain. The 15th and 16th were mainly dry and bright. Cold on 17th with scattered light showers developing, some wintry. The 18th was cold with wintry showers in north. The 19th saw a band of rain and sleet crossing all parts, with snow on high ground, and very cold north-westerly winds followed.

20th to 24th: Sleet and snow showers on 20th, heaviest in the north. Sunny intervals and showers on 21st, the showers heavy, thundery and wintry. Bright intervals and scattered wintry showers on 22nd. The 23rd and 24th were dry with some sun, but also some persistent freezing fog. Castlederg (County Tyrone) peaked at just -5.6 °C on 24th.

25th to 31st: A dry, bright Christmas morning with freezing fog patches slow to clear, then cloudy with rain and sleet with snow on higher ground. Rain and sleet showers on Boxing Day, with snow on high ground. Cloudy on 27th with scattered rain showers, sleet on high ground. Mainly dry with some sunshine on 28th. A cold start, with -7.3 °C recorded at Katesbridge (County Down). Mainly dry and bright on 29th before rain and sleet showers in the evening. Mostly cloudy on 30th with occasional rain or sleet and strong to gale-force north-easterly winds. Bright on 31st with a few showers.

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